

a question about "Titus Andronicus." "God bless my soul," he said. "I never read it, so how should I know!" The Shakespearean scholar who had questioned him was a little shocked—a fact which Henry Irving, the closest observer of men, did not fail to notice.

"When I am going to do 'Titus Andronicus/ or any other play," he said to me afterwards, "I shall know more about it than A or any other student."

There was no conceit in this. It was just a statement of fact. And it may not have been an admirable quality of Henry Irving's, but all his life he only took an interest in the things which concerned the work that he had in hand. When there was a question of his playing Napoleon, his room at Grafton Street was filled with Napoleonic literature. Busts of Napoleon, pictures of Napoleon, relics of Napoleon were everywhere. Then, when another play was being prepared, the busts, however fine, would probably go down to the cellar. It was not *Napoleon* who interested Henry Irving, but *Napoleon for his purpose*—two very different things.

His concentration during his three months¹ study of the play which he had in view was marvellous. When, at the end of the three months, he called the first rehearsal, he read the play exactly as it was going to be done on the first night. He knew exactly by that time what he personally was going to do on the first night, and the company did well to notice how he read his own part, for never again until the first night, though he rehearsed with them, would he show his conception so fully and completely.

These readings, which took place sometimes
in the green-
room or Beefsteak-room at the Lyceum,
sometimes at his
house in Grafton Street, were wonderful.
Never were the
names of the characters said by the reader,
but never was
there the slightest doubt as to which was
speaking. Henry